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United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019

Shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: comparative assessment of human resources structures

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 72/266 B, requested the Secretary-General to submit a comparative assessment of placing human resources functions in a single consolidated department or two distinct departments, with a view to ensuring a unified approach, optimizing the distribution of functions and avoiding duplication. These objectives can be achieved only through the segregation of strategic and operational functions into separate structures as proposed by the Secretary-General, an approach that is in line with broader trends in both public and private sector organizations. Complementarity in the functions of the two structures will be underpinned by robust coordination mechanisms.

The present report responds to that request by outlining the current structures and challenges related to human resources management in the Secretariat before assessing the ability of a single structure or a dual structure to effectively address these challenges. Although many of the current human resources management challenges faced by the Secretariat have structural causes, the report also draws the attention of the Secretariat to other considerations that must also must be taken into account, including in the areas of policy and delegation of authority.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 72/266 B, approved the reorganization of the current Department of Management and Department of Field Support into the proposed new Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and Department of Operational Support and the proposed new subsections 29A to 29D of section 29 of the programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019. It also requested the Secretary-General to submit a comparative assessment of placing human resources functions in a single consolidated department or two distinct departments, with a view to ensuring a unified approach, optimizing the distribution of functions and avoiding duplication. The present report responds to that request.

2. The current structure for human resources management at Headquarters, which includes both the Office of Human Resources Management in the Department of Management and the Field Personnel Division in the Department of Field Support, emerged over time as a result of the vast range of disparate activities for which the Secretariat is responsible. Before September 1993, responsibility for all administrative functions in the Secretariat, including human resources, was vested in the former Department of Administration and Management, which was reorganized into the present Department of Management in 1997. However, the increase in the complexity of the activities of the Secretariat in the early 1990s, driven largely by the significant expansion of peacekeeping missions, led to the recognition that a single structure could no longer effectively perform the full range of administrative functions for the entire Secretariat. As a result, the Field Operations Division was transferred from the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management to the newly established Department of Peacekeeping Operations to provide dedicated administrative and logistical support to peacekeeping missions. This division was later expanded to become the Office of Mission Support, which was subsequently transformed into the Department of Field Support when the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was restructured in 2007.

3. The existing structures have allowed the Secretariat to respond to the increasing demands placed upon the Organization, in particular in the field. However, the differing scope of the mandates and delegated authorities results in inconsistent levels and types of service to different types of entities across the Secretariat. Moreover, the division of responsibilities between the two departments is often unclear. To ensure that the Organization operates at a level of effectiveness and accountability that meets the expectations of Member States and ensures effective mandate implementation in all areas of work, and that enables the achievement of the Secretary-General's vision of reform, a paradigm shift is also required in the area of human resources management.

4. A number of efforts to reform the management of human resources have been undertaken over the past decades, and improvements will clearly continue to take place. Nevertheless, the Organization is still not as operational and effective as it needs to be. The reforms of the Secretary-General are therefore aimed at ensuring that the Organization has a workforce with the skill sets and dynamism to meet new and emerging challenges. A globally dispersed Secretariat with responsibility for a wide range of activities, ranging from the registration of treaties to conference management to the conduct of complex field and emergency operations, requires a more dynamic and responsive approach to accountable resource management if the Organization is to deliver results to Member States and vulnerable populations in a manner that recognizes the reality that has developed over the past seven decades.

5. The new management paradigm envisaged by the Secretary-General, which is based on the principles of simplification, decentralization and delegation, will

empower managers and hold them accountable for managing resources, including human resources, to deliver on their mandates. Implementing the new paradigm and addressing the underlying issues that have previously hindered the effective and accountable administration of the Secretariat require a reorganization of the management structures at Headquarters. The elimination of duplicative structures and the creation of two new departments, focused on policy consistency and accountability and operational support effectiveness, respectively, are necessary to ensure that enhanced delegation of authority to senior managers translates into improved programme delivery, responsible stewardship of Member State resources, and a more responsive and proactive United Nations. The new structure proposed by the Secretary-General and approved by the General Assembly separates strategy, policy and compliance from functions that support operational activities to eliminate duplication, streamline processes, create synergies and provide more timely and effective management support to programme and mandate delivery across the Secretariat.

II. Existing structures at Headquarters

6. Human resources responsibilities within the Secretariat at Headquarters are currently divided between the Office of Human Resources Management in the Department of Management and the Field Personnel Division in the Department of Field Support. In addition, most organizational entities within the Secretariat, such as departments, offices, regional economic commissions and peace operations, have an administrative unit or executive office that supports heads of organizational entities in human resources management through tasks such as filling vacancies and managing staff performance based on their responsibilities under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and related administrative instructions. These units also handle transactional functions, such as assisting staff members and, where applicable, their dependants in obtaining entitlements. In some places, the administrative units of one entity also provide services to others in the same location, as is the case with the Executive Office of the Department of Management, the joint Executive Office of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support at Headquarters and the divisions of administration at the offices away from Headquarters.

Office of Human Resources Management

7. The Office of Human Resources Management, headed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, is responsible for formulating policy and providing administrative support to entities across the Secretariat and strategic guidance and direction in human resources management. With the exception of matters reserved exclusively for the decision of the Secretary-General, the authority for human resources management through the administration of the Staff Regulations and Rules is delegated by the Secretary-General to the Under-Secretary-General for Management, who further delegates authorities to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management. The Office of Human Resources Management therefore serves as the central authority for matters pertaining to the management of human resources in the Secretariat. In addition to the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General, the Office of Human Resources Management consists of the Strategic Planning and Staffing Division, the Learning, Development and Human Resources Services Division, the Medical Services Division and the Human Resources Policy Service.

8. The Strategic Planning and Staffing Division is tasked with supporting the management of the Secretariat's human resources through strategic workforce

planning and by monitoring the use of delegated human resources management authority, managing the implementation of the staff selection system, developing a talent management system, conducting competitive examinations and performing outreach. The Learning, Development and Human Resources Services Division is responsible for administering and monitoring staff benefits and entitlements, providing advice to management and staff on the implementation of human resources management policies, developing and implementing learning and development programmes and overseeing the performance management system. The Medical Services Division is responsible for promoting staff health, providing advice to United Nations medical facilities and advising on issues related to medical administration, including the evaluation and certification of sick leave. The Human Resources Policy Service is responsible for developing human resources policies, making amendments and revisions to the Staff Regulations and Rules, conducting salary surveys and developing classification policies and standards, managing disciplinary cases related to United Nations staff and managing appeals against administrative decisions, including by representing the Secretary-General before the United Nations Dispute Tribunal.

Field Personnel Division

9. The Field Personnel Division in the Department of Field Support focuses on activities in support of peacekeeping operations, special political missions and the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda. It provides advice to peace operations on the use of their delegated authority, including through the development of guidance, on issues related to the system of administration of justice and on the processing of exceptions. It also supports enterprise initiatives, such as the implementation of Umoja and the review of continuing appointments, enables selection and recruitment in the field as well as the processing of senior-level appointments, supports workforce planning and organizational design, reports on and monitors delegated authorities, represents field requirements in deliberations on human resources policies and processes, and supports surge, start-up, transition and liquidation processes in peace operations.

10. With the establishment of the Department of Field Support, many of the services previously performed by the Office of Human Resources Management for peacekeeping and special political missions are delivered by the Field Personnel Division. In addition, as Secretariat-wide policies do not currently exist for many critical areas that primarily affect field duty stations, such as downsizing and the use of national staff and the Field Service category, the Field Personnel Division has also developed and issued interim guidance on these areas.

III. Current challenges

11. Despite the reforms undertaken in the past decade, the Secretariat still requires a transformation in the human resources management framework to allow it to more effectively support the delivery of its programmes and mandates. The key issues faced by the Organization in the area of human resources management were highlighted in an evaluation conducted in 2018 by the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the Office of Human Resources Management. The Secretariat has already begun to address many of these issues, as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General on the overview of human resources management reform for the period 2017–2018 (A/73/372/Add.1). However, many challenges stem from or are exacerbated by the existing structure of human resources management at Headquarters. The current breadth of functions performed by the Office of Human Resources Management, which spans both operational and strategic functions, prevents the Office from

devoting sufficient attention to either set of requirements. Furthermore, the overlapping responsibilities of the Office of Human Resources Management and the Field Personnel Division create confusion and result in inconsistent practices and interpretations across the Secretariat, as reflected in the observations of oversight bodies. These structural issues in turn exacerbate other persistent problems in human resources, including the need to strengthen policy analysis and development, increase attention to strategic issues such as workforce planning and talent management, improve approaches to the implementation of strategies and policies and strengthen the monitoring of delegated human resources management authority.

Policy analysis and development

12. The human resources policies of the Secretariat are a framework intended to ensure equal opportunities for and the fair treatment of all staff. The current framework is complex, leading to unnecessary delays, the inconsistent application of policy and reduced transparency and accountability in human resources management.

13. In its evaluation, OIOS found that the human resources policy framework did not facilitate the achievement of the human resources goals of the Organization. Its specific findings were as follows: the human resources policy framework was voluminous, fragmented, outdated and contained gaps and contradictions; the policy framework required significant interpretation and judgment, resulting in administrative inefficiency and inconsistent application; clients and staff perceived that the framework and its implementation focused disproportionately on compliance rather than results and did not adequately respond to operational needs; there was no mechanism for ensuring that policy changes were responsive and coherent; human resources policies and procedures were increasingly issued with little preparation time for implementation and with limited communication; and resources devoted to human resources policy development were limited. In an audit of the process for promulgating administrative issuances in the Secretariat,[1] OIOS also found that there were no periodic reviews to ensure that existing administrative issuances remain relevant.

Attention to strategic human resources management issues

14. Strategic management issues such as holistic and comprehensive talent management and workforce planning are important areas of focus for the Secretariat. Although some progress has been made, greater efforts, and more enabling structures and mechanisms, are needed to ensure the achievement of the objective of an integrated system in which the Organization can attract, retain and develop the talent it requires while also meeting organizational objectives for gender parity and geographical representation. The Secretariat has repeatedly reaffirmed the importance of these issues in its reports to the General Assembly on human resources management.

15. In its evaluation, OIOS found that the Office of Human Resources Management had made progress on individual components of talent management, but shortcomings remained and greater focus was needed in the area of integration. Specifically, it found that the Office had developed the basic tools for and supported the implementation of workforce planning pilots, but workforce planning had not gained traction in the Secretariat, that recruitment and selection policies, processes and practices had not fully supported the hiring of the best talent for the Organization, that, despite initiatives to improve performance management, the system continued to be viewed as mechanical and devoid of meaning, that investments in the training and development of Secretariat staff had been low, although the Department of

[1] Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), Internal Audit Division, report 2017/064.

Management had introduced cost-effective delivery options, that staff felt unsupported in outlining a career path in the Secretariat and that the individual components of the talent management framework were not integrated. A comprehensive multi-step approach has been designed to achieve the 120-day target for recruitment set by the General Assembly. However, achieving significant impact, for example, by hiring the best talent, will require strengthened operational support and compliance capacities. In addition, more attention needs to be given to the design and roll-out of system-wide strategies, policies and methodologies for career development and training that are aligned with programme mandates.

Ensuring consistency in implementation

16. Under the existing arrangements, the implementation of human resources strategies and policies varies considerably across the Secretariat for a variety of reasons. In its evaluation, OIOS found that the complicated policy framework required considerable interpretation, which was not necessarily consistent across entities of the Secretariat. In fact, the Board of Auditors, in its report on the accounts of the United Nations peacekeeping operations for the financial period ended 30 June 2017 (A/72/5 (Vol. II), chap. II), noted that a total of 281 different documents delegated authority or clarified the rules in the area of human resources, therefore requiring considerable interpretation. The Board also noted that the system of delegation of authority was not currently coherent and appeared to be built on an ad hoc basis. This contributes to the divergences in practice observed across various offices and departments by the oversight bodies, including in a recent audit by OIOS of education grant disbursements at the Secretariat.[2]

17. Gaps in policy also exist. For areas in which policies have not been developed or formally issued, parts of the Secretariat have issued their own guidance or standard operating procedures, which may differ from practices in other parts of the Secretariat. For example, peacekeeping and special political missions currently operate on interim guidance issued by the Department of Field Support on downsizing and the use of national staff and the Field Service category. Moreover, the fact that the Department of Field Support currently serves as the primary conduit for advice, support, monitoring and capacity-building to peacekeeping and special political missions, but not to other parts of the Secretariat, also introduces a structural component to the divergent approaches and inconsistent application of policies at the Secretariat.

Monitoring of delegated authority

18. In its evaluation, OIOS found that the delegation of authority framework on human resources lacked clarity and had contributed to inefficiencies, and that there had been little monitoring. In its thematic audit of education grant disbursements,[2] OIOS noted that the delegation of authority was formalized through a variety of documents, but that no central repository of those documents was maintained, impeding the monitoring of the use of delegated authority by either the Department of Management or the Department of Field Support.

Structural challenges

19. The existing structures at Headquarters contribute to the problems outlined above in two primary manners. First, the current responsibilities of the Office of Human Resources Management are vast, encompassing strategy, policy and compliance, as well as operational support, including transactional services to a large part of the Organization. The breadth of these functions combined with limited

[2] OIOS, Internal Audit Division, report 2018/043.

resources has constrained efforts to move forward on certain strategic reforms and innovations, including the full implementation of strategic workforce planning and career development. The Office has also faced challenges in policy analysis and the development of human resources policies that meet the requirements of all the different types of entities within the Secretariat. These issues stem largely from the fact that operational and transactional functions take up the bulk of the time, attention and resources of the Office. Moreover, the resources devoted to strategy are often overwhelmed by a perpetual reform cycle. At the same time, the dual focus of the Office also causes the quality of services provided to clients to suffer. In its evaluation, OIOS identified a need to improve client orientation in the provision of human resources services.

20. Second, as the bulk of interactions with peacekeeping and special political missions are handled by the Field Personnel Division, the Office of Human Resources Management is less familiar with the specific requirements of field operations. Furthermore, no formal process currently exists by which the requirements of different types of entities can be systematically reflected in policy development. These are important explanations for why the existing body of administrative policies managed by the Office does not meet the requirements of all types of entities within the Secretariat, in particular field missions, as highlighted by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations in its report of 2015 (see A/70/95-S/2015/446). The Panel raised concerns about the existing Headquarters-focused policies, administrative procedures and practices. It noted that field perspectives and needs were not adequately reflected in the development of human resources and other policies and that the field must be fully and thoroughly consulted during the development of administrative policies to ensure that the differentiated requirements of field operations are taken fully into consideration when major policy initiatives are proposed.

IV. Structural approaches to addressing existing challenges

Single structure

21. A monolithic human resources structure is one approach to addressing the human resources management issues facing the Secretariat. However, it is neither the preferred approach of the Secretary-General nor a vehicle for achieving the results intended through the establishment of the two new departments. In theory, having a single structure responsible for strategy, policy and operational support across the entirety of the Secretariat could improve consistency in the application of policy across different parts of the Secretariat. However, a monolithic structure would be responsible for such a broad range of disparate functions, and its sheer size and complexity would make it too unwieldy to be effectively and efficiently managed. Such a structure would not address the risks of drawing resources and attention from longer-term strategic and policy-related goals towards addressing more immediate operational requirements. Moreover, the allocation of policy and compliance functions to the same department as execution functions would undermine the functional separation that serves as one of the key features of the restructured departments.

22. In summary, with regard to the problems outlined above, while a monolithic human resources structure might appear to promote a unified approach to human resources management across the Secretariat and avoid duplication, the breadth of its responsibilities would make too unwieldy to function effectively. Moreover, such a structure would not represent the optimal distribution of functions as the lack of separation between strategic and operational functions would not solve the current

problems related to policy analysis and development. It would also not ensure that sufficient attention is paid to strategic and policy issues.

Dual structure

23. A dual structure for human resources management in which both structures have distinct roles and serve all organizational entities within the Secretariat would facilitate a clear division of responsibility that would not only enable the Organization to address the current gaps and shortcomings in policy development but also allow for a clear separation of the operational and compliance functions as these would be located in two separate departments. It is very difficult for any structure in an organization to be simultaneously responsible for the provision of client-oriented services and internal oversight and quality assurance over those same services. As previously indicated by the Secretary-General, the United Nations has lost its ability to constructively critique itself and, for this, it is imperative that there be a separation of these functions to protect against the likelihood of conflicts of interest and allow for better risk management and more objective evaluation. It would also facilitate the specialization required to ensure that resources and management attention are dedicated to the strategy and policy aspects of human resources, on the one hand, and to operational and client-oriented functions, on the other.

24. A dual human resources structure in which responsibilities are separated between strategic and operational activities would address concerns related to inconsistent approaches to implementation and problems related to policy analysis and development. It would also increase attention to strategic issues by ring-fencing the resources dedicated to those tasks, including policy development, and separating them from operational and transactional support services. Such a structure would therefore ensure a unified approach to human resources management, optimize the distribution of functions and avoid duplication. However, a dual structure introduces the risk of divergence between the policy and operational functions. This would need to be mitigated by establishing coordination mechanisms between the two structures to ensure effective feedback between the policy and operational functions.

Proposal of the Secretary-General

25. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: implementing a new management architecture for improved effectiveness and strengthened accountability" (A/72/492/Add.2), the proposal for two empowered departments serving all Secretariat entities is based on the sound management principles of unity of command and purpose, clarity of roles and responsibilities and empowered delegations of authority that are rational, holistic and decentralized as far as possible within an established risk framework. This structure ensures that there is dedicated capacity and attention to allow the Secretariat to focus on strategic human resources requirements in the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, operational and transactional activities in the Department of Operational Support and programme delivery in the other organizational entities across the Secretariat.

26. While the present report focuses on the structures of the proposed Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the proposed Department of Operational Support, it cannot be stressed enough that the focus of the management reforms is on the empowerment of the nearly 100 discrete departments, offices, regional commissions, tribunals and field operations that make up the Secretariat and that the new management structures exist to support these entities in delivering their mandates effectively and accountably.

27. Under the new paradigm, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance will work to align the Organization's human resources with its mission and mandate through the development and refinement of a global human resources strategy and innovative policies based on the needs of both the Organization and its personnel. It will be the primary external client-facing department, serving as the main interface of the Secretariat with Member States and the oversight bodies. The Office of Human Resources in the Department will focus on establishing human resources strategies, developing human resources policies and establishing accountability and compliance frameworks for human resources (and other areas) with effective monitoring systems. This focus is critical to building and maintaining a sound foundation for the envisioned decentralization and the empowerment of managers at the point of delivery, with the requisite accountability. Managers will need to have this robust framework to exercise the responsibilities delegated to them. A new Business Transformation and Accountability Division in the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance would will monitor in real time the decisions taken under delegated authority in entities across the Secretariat.

28. As much decision-making authority as practicable will be delegated directly from the Secretary-General to heads of entities. However, not all operational human resources functions can be effectively executed in a decentralized manner. The Department of Operational Support will be the primary internal client-facing department, and the Human Resources Services Division in the Department will perform operational tasks that cannot be effectively delegated, including global roster management, the administration of examinations, the placement of staff across entities during downsizing exercises or as part of mobility and support to surge and crisis situations, in addition to providing advice to clients on the application of the policy framework and performing human resources tasks on behalf of entities that lack the requisite capacity to accountably execute their delegated authority. By consolidating operational functions in one department, entities across the Secretariat will have a designated department focused on direct client services with the ability to shape human resources processes from end to end. This will allow for fast and effective service delivery, ensuring that managers in client entities are well-equipped to apply the strategies and frameworks developed by the Organization. Having an entity that provides dedicated operational advice to client entities in turn allows for increased efficiency, consistency and speed in decision-making across the Secretariat. These benefits can be further enhanced by consolidating transactional functions in shared service centres reporting to the Department of Operational Support, as proposed in the global service delivery model.

29. While many of the benefits of the new departments will be felt in entities located in the most volatile environments, all entities, including those at Headquarters, will benefit from the enhanced delegation of authority that will be progressively rolled out over the course of 2019, a simplified and more responsive policy framework, a single point of contact for advice and the ability to devote a greater proportion of their resources and attention to programme delivery rather than administrative tasks. Entities that lack sufficient capacity to accountably exercise the full range of delegated authorities will be supported through units such as the Headquarters Client Support Section in the Department of Operational Support and the divisions of administration in the offices away from Headquarters.

30. To ensure effective coordination between the two departments and a constant feedback loop between strategy and policy, on the one hand, and execution, on the other, a senior management committee co-chaired by the Under-Secretaries-General of the two departments will bring together, on a regular basis, the senior management of both departments to identify and address cross-departmental priorities, strategic issues and issues related to the efficient and effective delivery of services to clients.

This coordination mechanism between the two departments is separate from, but complementary to, the Management Client Board, which will serve as a feedback and consultation mechanism between management architecture at Headquarters and the different types of entities across the Secretariat. As indicated in the previous reports of the Secretary-General on shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations, the Management Client Board will be co-chaired by the heads of the two new departments and include rotating representatives of each of the different types of entities across the Secretariat. The Board will serve as a mechanism by which the different types of entities can ensure that their particular requirements and concerns are understood by the two new departments and are therefore reflected in the development of regulations, rules and policies and the delivery of operational support. Where an operational requirement is identified, the Board will also feed into policymaking processes, including the development of field-specific policies, if required.

31. Another area that would benefit from the clear delineation of responsibilities between the two departments is the provision of advice on the application of human resources policies. Most requests would be addressed at the client level through the human resources capacity in the executive office or administrative unit of the organizational entity in question, whether a department, office, regional commission or mission. Should client-level human resources sections or officers be unable to resolve a human resources issue and require advice on the practical implementation of policy or an operational issue not captured in the policy frameworks, the business partner in the client entity would refer the issue to the Human Resources Services Division in the Department of Operational Support. This division, by virtue of its dedicated human resources support capacities and its global visibility over human resources management implementation across all Secretariat entities, would be in a position to provide advice on the vast majority of issues. In complex cases or exceptional issues not covered in the policy framework, the Department of Operational Support would escalate the issue to the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance for a decision. The definitive interpretation provided would then guide the advice given by the Department of Operational Support on similar issues in future. This tiered model for the delivery of human resources advice has many benefits over the current ad hoc framework as it establishes, in the Department of Operational Support, a clear entry point for questions related to human resources management. It also ensures that the advice given is in line with the policy framework without overwhelming the policy functions with day-to-day client-facing support, while also drawing the attention of the policy functions to gaps and emerging issues not covered by existing policy that may warrant additional attention.

32. Recruitment, for example, is an issue routinely identified as a pain point under the current arrangements. In the future, the division of responsibilities among the various stakeholders will be clear and will allow all parts of the Secretariat to be better able to secure the right expertise in the right place and at the right time. The Office of Human Resources of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance will be responsible for maintaining the overall human resources policy framework, reflecting the requirements of all types of entities as communicated through the Management Client Board. The Human Resources Services Division in the Department of Operational Support will be responsible for developing streamlined beginning-to-end recruitment processes and maintaining and refreshing rosters, including through the administration of examinations, to ensure that qualified candidates are available to meet any requirements that may arise across the Secretariat, all within the policy framework managed by the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance. Empowered heads of entities will be presented with shortlists of pre-cleared candidates to choose from to fill vacancies and will be accountable for meeting gender and geographical representation targets.

Any questions they have on the interpretation and implementation of policies would go to their business partner, who can refer those questions to the advisory capacities in the Department of Operational Support.

33. Having human resources functions divided between the two departments also facilitates an appropriate system of checks and balances in line with the Secretary-General's vision of decentralization, clear delineation of responsibilities and accountable exercise of delegated authorities. Checks and balances are ensured by having one department monitor the exercise of authorities and determine when that authority is not being exercised as required, while a separate department advises on the day-to-day exercise of the authorities and assumes this responsibility in the event that it is either not granted to or removed from an entity, thereby ensuring objectivity in the making of such determinations. This approach is aligned with global best practices in the public sector with respect to the separation of implementation and compliance functions and will allow for continual service improvements within a robust internal control framework.

Comparison with other organizations

34. Direct comparisons between United Nations structures and other organizations are difficult given the multilateral nature of the Organization and its sheer size and broad remit. Nevertheless, analogues to the proposed human resources structure can be found in many national governments. For example, policies and conditions of service for the civil service are often determined for the entire government by a dedicated agency or commission, and each individual ministry often has its own structures for managing its personnel and, in the case of ministries of foreign affairs, supporting the personnel requirements for diplomatic missions and other presences abroad.

35. More broadly, in both the private and the public sectors, there is a clear trend towards the formal separation of strategic and operational human resources tasks into separate, distinct organizational units. This enables organizations to separate operational functions, including the standardized or routine requirements critical to the normal operation of the organization, from the traditional human resources structure to allow a greater focus on strategic human resources responsibilities. The consolidation of operational functions also allows organizations to standardize processes, improve controls and accountability and decrease duplication to improve efficiency. The highest-performing operational structures greatly streamline processes by applying continuous process improvement, automation technology and advanced analytics. They also adopt a service delivery mindset to improve customer experience and ensure timely service delivery.

36. Analysis of human resources structures across both private and public sector organizations shows that key benefits can be realized through the separation of strategic and operational functions. In general, consolidating operational functions can enable organizations to achieve significant efficiencies and improvements in process effectiveness at scale. It also allows both sides of human resources to focus on their missions. Without a clear separation, it is easy to focus on addressing the more immediate and familiar operational requirements at the expense of the equally critical, longer-term strategic requirements. A formal and physical separation can serve to ensure a true division of roles. While human resources personnel performing strategic and operational roles are placed in the same structure under the traditional human resources model, in practice the links between the two aspects of human resources are largely only necessary at senior levels and can be detrimental at more junior levels. The experience of other organizations shows that, at the senior levels, coordination between strategic and operational human resources structures to ensure alignment on cross-cutting topics is necessary primarily in two areas, namely,

translating newly created policies into processes and supporting the management of exceptions when issues arise. Most other topics can and should be handled entirely within one of the two structures.

V. Other considerations

37. The objective of the management reform is not to establish new structures, but rather to facilitate the overall paradigm shift to a decentralized Secretariat, where responsibility for programme delivery is aligned with authority for resource management under a streamlined policy framework, all to enhance the ability of the Organization to deliver on its mandates in an effective and accountable manner. The new structures serve as enablers for this paradigm shift and are critical for addressing long-standing challenges in the existing management framework. However, addressing the management architecture is only part of the equation. Some key problems that must be addressed, such as the lengthy recruitment process, are also products of the complex administrative policies and procedures that currently exist. Other factors include the need for an effective client feedback mechanism, effective oversight of quality and compliance, and the availability of surge and other support in situations of high demand, complexity and urgency.

38. To address these challenges, the Secretariat has already taken steps within the existing structure to improve human resources management. For example, a full review of the entire human resources regulatory framework, including the Staff Regulations and Rules, administrative instructions, bulletins and circulars, is under way. A simplified framework will ensure greater consistency and accountability in the application of human resources policies. An integrated approach to strategic workforce planning has also been developed and is being piloted. These issues are further elaborated in the report of the Secretary-General on the global human resources strategy 2019–2021: building a more effective, transparent and accountable United Nations (A/73/378).

39. The management reform draws from lessons learned from the restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the establishment of the Department of Field Support in 2007, which was intended to improve the support to peacekeeping operations at a time when the scale and complexity of mandates were growing. Key challenges identified at the time by the Secretariat and oversight bodies such as OIOS included the lack of sufficient focus on support issues by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations given its broad span of control, which previously included substantive and support responsibilities, issues related to the delegation of authority and the alignment of authority with responsibility and resources, and rigid rules and procedures that did not correspond to the realities and requirements of peacekeeping operations.

40. The more than 10 years of experience with the Department of Field Support have shown that an operationally focused department can significantly improve the ability of the Organization to deliver in challenging environments, as illustrated through the establishment of missions in locations such as Libya, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan, as well as the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response. However, it also illustrates the limits of what is possible when structural changes are not also accompanied by changes to the delegation of authority and revisions to the policy framework. These challenges are reflected in observations by the oversight bodies, including the recommendations from audits conducted in 2015 of the delegation of human resources management authority by the Department of Field Support and the Field Personnel Specialist Support Service in the Field Personnel Division of the Department of Field Support.

VI. Conclusion

41. The current human resources management framework has consistently been identified by managers across the Secretariat as a major impediment to effective programme delivery. Previous attempts to improve human resources management in the Secretariat have not achieved the desired results, as policy changes alone cannot address the many aspects of the existing challenges. The management reform recognizes that there are underlying structural problems from which many of the current challenges stem. Ensuring that the Organization is able to effectively and accountably deliver programmes and implement its mandates requires not only that entities across the Secretariat are empowered, but also that they are adequately and effectively supported in both the strategic and operational aspects of human resources management. The Secretary-General is convinced that the structure presented in his report on implementing a new management architecture for improved effectiveness and strengthened accountability achieves this by establishing a dedicated structure for strategic human resources functions and a dedicated structure for operational functions, both of which will service all entities across the Secretariat. This separation of functions ensures that there is no competition for attention and resources between the two sets of functions. Moreover, it takes into account the different mindsets required to effectively perform these two sets of functions, allowing one to focus on ensuring alignment between talent and the achievement of the Organization's objectives and the other to focus on achieving excellence in service delivery. Coordination between these two structures will be ensured through a senior management committee and their activities will be informed by feedback received through the Management Client Board.

42. Altogether, this dual structure will ensure a unified approach across the Secretariat for human resources, optimizing the distribution of functions and avoiding duplication. A single consolidated structure for human resources activities would not be able to meet these objectives or address the challenges that are felt by staff and managers across the Secretariat on a daily basis and that have been repeatedly highlighted by the oversight bodies. A major change management process that does not effectively address the structural aspects of the current challenges faced by the Secretariat in the area of human resources management would amount to a significant missed opportunity by the Organization to help to address a perennial pain point that undermines its ability to effectively and accountably implement its mandates.

VII. Action to be taken by the General Assembly

43. **The General Assembly is requested to take note of the present report.**